

Ford GPA by Jack Rigger

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The Tamiya 1/35 scale Ford "GPA" (General Purpose Amphibian) is an old kit from the 70's. Even though it is well engineered, it does have a few shortcomings typical of the period. Some of the details are crudely integrated into the kit design and need to be corrected or modified.

The leaf springs are molded smooth without detail, so I added pieces of stretched sprue glued lengthwise along each spring to simulate the individual leaves. I then added strip styrene to simulate the bands holding the leaves together. This also hid the huge gaps left by the axle assemblies.

The three molded-in handles on the sides of the hull were ground out with a ball shaped grinding bit and replaced with strip styrene. The deck is too thick and sits above the edges of the hull. It had to be thinned down to properly sit below flush. Styrene strip braces were added to the air intake cover. The headlights were also ground out with small holes drilled inside them to simulate a bulb. They were then wired up using surgical suture. A few grab handles at the edges of the deck were made out of left over brass from an old photo etch set. (I just can't throw anything away!)

Tire valves were made using stretched sprue. The lug holes were drilled out for the spare tire. A hold-down mechanism was fashioned from strip styrene and a bolt & nut cut off an old wheel from the spares box.

All the shift levers (except one) were replaced with stretched sprue. The kit's ball knobs were drilled out to accept the new levers. The instruments were all hand painted, then covered with a drop of clear gloss to simulate glass. The seat cushions were carved out with a tiny drum sander on a moto-tool to look as though they have been sat in.

The whole vehicle was airbrushed using Poly Scale US olive drab. After thoroughly dry, it was given a wash with thinned down flat black enamel, the excess wiped clean and left to dry. Then I dry-brushed with the base color to accent the raised detail. Next, the recessed details were accented again with black chalk pastel applied with a small paint brush. Then I dry-brushed once more with dust and dirt colored enamels and acrylics in the proper areas to look used and weathered.

Because the decals have a lot of clear areas, the entire model was then shot with a couple of light coats of Future floor polish and left to dry thoroughly before applying the decals. The decals went on smoothly, but I had to use liberal amounts of Micro Sol to help them lay down. They were then weathered as described above and the entire model was shot with Testors clear flat.

The windscreen was masked off using bare metal foil and painted. Masks were cut from masking tape with a compass and applied where the wipers would have cleaned the windscreen, then I lightly dry brushed the clear area with a khaki color.

The kit supplied driver was OK and I liked the pose, however the fingers needed separated and the clothing required some undercut scribing to bring out some relief. He was painted using mostly Poly Scale paints and Humbrol flesh. The highlighting and shadowing was done basically the same as the vehicle, with washes, dry brushing, and pastels. I even added a little 5 o'clock shadow with black pastel.

This model was a truly enjoyable and satisfying endeavor and I would highly recommend this kit to any armor enthusiast, beginner to experienced.

Album (select a picture to view at full size):

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